

NEWARK HOUSING AUTHORITY

SEP 19 1939

NEGRO HOUSING SURVEY

The problem of housing is more acute for Negro residents of Newark than for any other racial or national group. This is the conclusion of the study made of the Negro situation in our city, with particular emphasis on the upper Tenth Ward. This area and the neighborhood of Pennington Court is the section into which the Newark Housing Authority is bringing a new opportunity of living.

44,000 persons, almost 10% of the population of the City of Newark, are colored; 18,900, or 41% of Newark's relief load, are colored; 10,378, or 10.2% of all tenant families in Newark, are colored -- according to the 1935 real property inventory.

The distribution of these colored families indicates certain areas of heavy concentration and a general scattering in other areas. Over 60% of all Negro families live in the Hill District, which extends from Avon Avenue to Orange Street and from High Street to just above Belmont Avenue. Most of the rest live in a factory strip running on the south side of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks about four blocks into the Ironbound Section and including the Pennington Court site.

A block by block survey has been made of the area running from Greene Street to Thomas Street, and from New Jersey Railroad Avenue to Jefferson Street. The following streets were carefully observed and found to have colored residents:-

1. Elm Street, from R.R. to McWhorter Street.
2. Walnut Street, from R.R. to McWhorter Street.
3. Garden Street, from R.R. to McWhorter Street.
4. East Kinney Street, from R.R. to Jefferson Street.
5. Oliver Street, from R.R. to Jefferson Street.
6. Chestnut Street, from R.R. to Jefferson Street.
7. Malvern Street, from Pacific to Jefferson Streets.
8. Vesey Street, from R.R. to McWhorter Street.
9. Johnson Avenue, from R.R. to Pacific Street.
10. Pennington Street, from R.R. to Hermon Street.
11. Tichenor Street, from R.R. to Dawson Street.
12. South Street, from R.R. to Dawson Street.
13. Thomas Street, from R.R. to Pacific Street.
14. Calumet Street, from Pacific to Jefferson Streets.
15. Delancy Street, from Pacific to Jefferson Streets.
16. Harrison Street, from Chestnut to Thomas Streets.
17. Jefferson Street, from Malvern to South Streets.
18. Dawson Street, from Johnson Avenue to Thomas Street.
19. Mulberry Street, from South to Thomas Streets.

These streets vary in the concentration of colored families, from as little as one house to complete blocks. Below Jefferson Street the complexion of the neighborhood is predominantly white. In the area are five churches having colored congregations, as follows:-

1. Randall Chapel of the United American Free Will Baptist Church
2. Holy Trinity Baptist Church
3. The Church of the New Age
4. Mt. Zion Baptist Church
5. Queen of Angels Catholic Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church is one of the largest and most influential churches serving the colored community. On Tichenor Street, between the Railroad and Hermon Street, is located the Tenth Ward Colored Protective League. Among the 36 families living on the South and Pacific Streets Site before demolition were five colored families, two of whom moved away before they could be interviewed.

The Board of Education figures for attendance at the Oliver Street and South Street schools show that 14% of the Oliver Street School children were colored, and 23% of the South Street School children were colored, during the year ending June, 1939.

In interpreting these school statistics it must be recognized that children from below Jefferson Street were included. The area below Jefferson Street was considered too remote for purposes of this study. If proper deductions are made for white children residing below Jefferson Street, the proportion of colored children in the two schools mentioned would obviously be higher.

The difficulty of housing the Negro in Newark was dramatically encountered by the Newark Housing Authority in its attempts to relocate the 217 colored families from the Orange and Nesbitt Streets Site. Whereas in the beginning of the relocation program we were able in many instances to improve the standards of the people who were obliged to move, as the end of the program approached we were put in the position of urging people to accept accommodations inferior to those in which they had lived. Particularly is this true of families on relief or families with high standards but very limited income. Experience indicates that we must expect a more difficult job of relocation for the projects to come, because the available vacancies for colored have been filled.

Some of those colored families who were better off financially moved into East Orange or purchased houses in the adjoining communities. The least able financially, however, were obliged to remain in Newark and take whatever shelter they could get. Quite naturally this situation has created a degree of resentment on the part of the slum dweller who is forced to move.

Unless families to be relocated can be assured that their relocation is but temporary and that better housing will be available to them, our problem of relocation will be even harder and the general program delayed. Before construction can begin on the Orange and Nesbitt Extension, the Livingston Site and the Roanoke Site, families must be moved. Many colored families reside in the Orange and Nesbitt and the Livingston Sites. Unless some new housing is made available to these people and unless they see and realize its availability, they will be reluctant to move from the sites, and will oblige the Housing Authority to resort to measures which up to the Present time we have been able to avoid. These measures, such as Constable notices, dispossession proceedings and evictions, would result in very harmful publicity for the Authority, arouse resentment in the people who should be most enthusiastic in their support of our program, and would constitute a callous lack of understanding of the basic features of Newark's particular problems.

That the situation in Newark is not unique, except in its intensity, is made clear by the Financial Survey of Urban Housing conducted by the Department of Commerce in 1937. The Department of Commerce conducted a very careful study of the housing problems of the City of Trenton, New Jersey. The following quotation will show one aspect of the Negro problem in Trenton, which is comparable to the Negro housing problem here:-

P.222 - "Most rents of Negroes were concentrated in rent groups between \$120.00 and \$300.00, while most rents for whites were between \$180.00 and \$480.00. Negroes typically occupied somewhat smaller dwelling units than whites, with more persons per dwelling unit and a higher density than for whites. The proportion of income required for the payment of rent, and the percent delinquent in rent, were much higher for Negro than for white tenants."

A study of our own site residents at Orange and Nesbitt Streets indicates that the available number of rooms occupied by a colored family is 4.27 rooms. The average rent paid by the colored tenant is \$18.17. The average number of rooms occupied

by a colored family on relief is 4.17, and the average rent paid by that family is \$14.78.

CONCLUSION

This study points imperatively toward one conclusion. Some arrangement must be made as early as possible to relieve the pressure in the colored housing problem. If one section of the first housing project to be opened could be made available to colored families, the complexion of the neighborhood would not change in the slightest, as it is already the center of a substantial colored community -- served by five churches and in some degree by two schools. If colored families could move into some section of the first housing project, then the apartments from which they move out would be available for relocation of colored families now on our remaining sites, if these families were not moved directly into the project.

The situation resembles a log jam at a lumber camp. Unless something is done to get some of the logs over the dam, the whole supply of lumber will remain in a perpetual jam. The Newark Housing situation is in a stage of stagnation. They do not move because there is no place for them to go. The most difficult relocation cases that we have had have not been among Negroes. At Orange and Nesbitt Streets, as at South and Pacific Streets, they have been among the most willing and cooperative in an attempt to find new places.

On July 25th, following receipt of an interoffice communication requesting this report, we began to note the color of applicants and their preference as to site -- in taking preliminary applications.

From July 25th to August 22nd, there have been 433 preliminary applications - 244 of these applications have been filed by colored families. 123 of the 244 colored families expressed a preference for Pennington Court; many of the balance expressed no particular site preference.

The critical nature of the problem here discussed is illustrated by this instance from our relocation office:-

A family of four, including two small children, are paying part relief and part cash toward their rent. The only vacancy which we can find for them is four rooms and a toilet in a basement on Charlton Street. This basement flat, with cellar windows, is being held for rent of \$22.00 a month; it has, of course, no heat or sunlight. The reason for the high rent is the scarcity of places for colored families, and especially for those who are either part or full relief clients.

The interoffice communication abovementioned suggested, in connection with the report on Negro housing problems, that a recommendation be made. The following is the recommendation, as a result of careful consideration:-

Recommendation

It is respectfully submitted that at least one building at the westerly side of Pennington Court be made available to colored families who can qualify.

Harry B. Weiss,
Administrative Assistant
to the
Executive Director.